New Fiction

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as well as in their necessary contacts. It is a thoughtful book, of strong personal flavor, and with a powerful appeal to the mature reader. H. L. PANGBORN.

THE WIND BLOWETH. By Donn Byrne. The Century Company.

THE manner of the rhapsodist is hard to sustain through four hundred pages of narrative. It can only be done with entire success when the poet's voice has a wide range and when he is capable of changing now and then from one key to another by proper modulation. It is also impossible to keep it up without tiring the listener unless there is the relief of occasional humor. Yet Mr. Byrne comes very near working the miracle of holding the rhapsodist's single tone throughout a long story; he almost does it, but not quite. In his prefatory dedication (which includes the names of Lever and Lover, of whom he might have learned a great deal) Mr. Byrne concludes, with modest defiance, that the "faults" of the book "are because I cannot write better yet." A disarming claim; yet the fact remains that he probably can write better, some day, if he tries hard enough; if he can learn to vary his tone, and if he can become less patently self-conscious.

The book invites such comment since it is a pretentious affair. That is one trouble. He has the air of starting off with a promise of great things, which do not wholly materialize. The book has "atmosphere"; too much of it, since it sometimes turns into fog. That suggests a more accurate comparison: it is like a very fine negative which has been somewhat injured in the process of developing it—fogged. Moreover, it is always the same atmosphere. The wind bloweth, but if it blows monotonously, steadily, from one quarter for too long it gets on one's nerves.

Nevertheless, the book is a noteworthy performance. It is of course very Irish, or, one should rather say, Gaelic. It might be called a series of scenes in the love life of an Irish sailor, though there are other elements also in the career of Shane, whom we first meet as "wee Shane" on a more or less magic hilltop, dreaming and seeing visions. Later on we have the story of his first wife, whose remains we first meet at her wake. She was a cold, incomplete person and it was well for Shane that she died. Incidentally, the account of her avaricious, mean old mother is one of the finest things in the book. Next comes a more passionate interlude, with "Claire-Anne" of Marseilles, whose life had not been wholly blameless, and who will not marry him, though she loves him. So he sticks a dagger into her, and passes on to the Orient, where an entirely different sort of woman continues his education.

GEORGE WOOD.

PEREGRINE'S PROGRESS. By Jeffery Farnol. Little, Brown & Co.

IT is a pleasant game that Mr. Farnol's people play, and the host of readers who have played it with them before will be glad to know that in this story he goes back again to his favorite era and scenery: the English road and highways and bypaths of something more than a century ago. But it is really an ageless thing and might have been staged in Bohemia or any Happy Valley, for it is the sunny land of mild romance and gallant adventuring. It is also lit up with a gentle whimsicality, an elaborate playfulness that is always careful to explain itself as intentionally jesting. Of course there is some rougher, more rudely masculine play; cudgels fall and blood is allowed to flow, but no timid reader need be alarmed. The worst characters remember to "roar you an't were any nightingale."

The Peregrine, whose progress is told in the first person, appears at the age of nineteen as a truly "ladylike" young man, at first. His two robust uncles taunt him with his inexperience and ladylike qualities, which are due to his upbringing by a maiden aunt, but there is a man concealed in Peregrine and he decides to show them all how manlike he can be. So he runs away, or, more accurately, takes to the open road. Thus the story is fairly launched and things at once begin to happen to the youthful seeker after experience. At the very outset he meets an "Extraordinary Tinker," a philosopher whom we have met before and are glad to see again. Leaving this fount of wayside wisdom he goes through a number of minor trials, meets a "down at heel gentleman," highwaymen and others and at last falls in with the inevitable gypsies. Here is also the heroine—a delayed entrance, but all the more effective, and neither Mr. Farnol nor his readers are in any hurry. The girl is a diamond in the rough and is plainly labeled by the gypsies as a dangerous shrew. She carries a well sharpened knife and is not slow to use it. Much against his will, the youthful Peregrine acquires her, being obliged to "buy" her for all the money in his purse, and they start off together in their joint wanderings.

It needs not a prophet nor the son of a prophet to foretell that the gypsy Diana is in reality far other and better than she seems, but the detail of her story and the conjoined story of her squire should be followed step by step in the book itself. It passes through many phases; a long journey with plenty of digression, pleasant dallying by the wayside and enough of a touch of romantic heartbreak and warm tears to keep the reader happy. It is Mr. Farnol at his amiable best.

WHERE THE BLUE BEGINS. By Christopher Morley. Doubleday, Page & Co.

IT might have been a good idea to keep this book anonymous for two or three editions. It would have made a pleasant little mystery, few "Morley fans" would have guessed, and the book's chances of reaching the right readers promptly and missing the wrong ones would be better by quite a segment of the difference between obscurity and Mr. Morley's present following. For the right readers and that following by no means coextend. Inevitably, if not altogether justly, he has come to be known by his works for an unflagging geniality, a comfortable hearth rug contentment, a mince pie saturation with essences of Old England and the property of making a reader feel at home in very literary company without much tax on his powers of appreciation. And those qualities appeal to some people who will hardly know what "Where the Blue Begins" is all about and to some who will know but may be rather hurt by parts of it, while its own surprisingly different qualities should delight many other people who don't coo, as the booksellers have been said to do, at the mention of the author's name. From their point of view, which the reviewer shares, this is his first book.

It is a fanciful tale of a world like ours, especially of a New York like ours, whose persons are dogs. Some of it is only story telling and foolery—skillful story telling and delicious foolery—but a good deal is allegorical and parts are both ambitiously and successfully satirical. There is quiet, accurate laughter at the froth of buncombe on Big Business in merchandising and the related social vanities and there is temperate but sincere raillery at the giving of a gilded ritual to a soul that asks for God. To have done that well in any medium would have been a creditable feat; to have done it in terms of dogs, with a good taste that must disarm any but the most indurated of conservative readers, is a tour de force; and to have done it with inspired cleverness and craftsmanship is to have produced something measurably near a work of art—a charming book, of a kind in which American literature has always been poor. "Where the Blue Begins" is far more poetic than Mr. Morley's best poetry, far more humorous than his most enjoyed humor, far wiser than his essays and chap

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